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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Friday, 1 July 1994, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. BUTLER	(Australia)
later:	Mr. BIVERO (Vice-President)	(Venezuela)

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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued) (A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, E/1994/34, Parts I, II and III, E/1994/35, E/1994/64 and Add.1 and 2, E/1994/84, E/1994/93)

Mr. MALLYA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that he was not entirely sure whether the agencies understood national execution in the same way as his Government, namely, as including national design of programmes. He wished to know how the agencies intended to ensure resources had an impact at the village level and whether they intended to participate in the fund for African development.

Mr. HADID (Observer for Algeria), noting the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199, paragraph 33, requested a copy of the United Nations system-wide manual on which agreement was due to be reached by 1 July 1994.

While heartened by the compromise reached on the subject of the Office for Project Services (OPS), his delegation wondered what steps would be taken to avoid a conflict of interest arising from the placing of OPS, with its responsibilities as an executing agency, in the purview of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with its role as a central funding agency.

His delegation had also been relieved to hear the somewhat more optimistic figures concerning pledges to the World Food Programme (WFP) stated by the Executive Director of the Programme. However, those figures still lagged behind the traditional pattern of pledges by some 15 per cent, and there appeared to have been no improvement in terms of pledges to UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In a situation of shrinking resources, he wished to know how the various agencies would react to the danger of activities becoming more donor-driven.

With regard to the 20:20 compact, there was still a risk that countries which, while increasing their percentage resource target, actually reduced their level of official development assistance (ODA) would receive more praise than those that concentrated on the agreed international target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP).

His delegation would also appreciate specific comments on progress with regard to decentralization and joint programming.

Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) asked, in connection with a question raised at an earlier meeting by the representative of India, whether the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) had identified problems relating to field implementation. Also pursuant to a question raised by the delegation of India, she sought assurance that all agencies remained committed to the joint programme on HIV/AIDS.

With regard to the 20:20 compact, her delegation was still not sure whether the objective was seen in terms of inputs or outputs. She wondered what the members of JCGP, particularly the administrator of UNDP, were doing to work on definition issues with other interested parties such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Secretariat.

In conclusion, she commended the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for raising the question of the division of labour according to function rather than sub-sector.

Mr. KAARIA (Observer for Finland) asked, in the light of UNICEF's apparently successful experience with national execution, how increased emphasis on that approach would affect the numbers of staff serving in the field vis-à-vis those at Headquarters and what particular difficulties if might engender for UNDP.

With regard to priority-setting, his delegation's understanding of the compromise agreement reflected in General Assembly resolution 48/162, paragraph 16 (a), was that, while countries themselves were indeed responsible for priorities, the operating agencies should nevertheless establish their own

priorities. Action could take place when the two met. Executive Boards, meanwhile, could usefully identify policy issues for discussion by the Economic and Social Council provided they did not go beyond the scope of their specific mandates.

Finally, he wondered whether the heads of agencies believed that the 20:20 compact should be applied to structural adjustment programmes.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that national execution was commonly defined as including national ownership and support for national capacity-building. The rapid progress made by UNDP in moving towards national execution could be seen in figures for the fifth cycle, where the proportion of resources programmed in that way had risen from near zero to 40 per cent, while the level of resources programmed through agencies had declined from about 80 to 35 per cent. He intended to ensure there was no conflict of interest under the new arrangements for OPS by, inter alia, increasing transparency, broadening management and giving the Office the status of an agency in partnership with UNDP. The important compromise change should guarantee a strong and workable OPS in the future.

As resources declined, activities might become more thematic rather than more donor-driven. In such a situation, it might be useful to supplement the 0.7 per cent goal with another - such as doubling ODA or simply increasing it by half over a certain period of time - in order to galvanize more energies.

The joint HIV/AIDS programme had the full support of UNDP: the key protagonists were working together better than ever before.

With regard to the 20:20 compact, UNDP would be working with other United Nations agencies to pool ideas on further elaboration of the concept. The dialogue would certainly be broadened to include other bodies.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said, with reference to the first question raised by the representative of Algeria, that the contents of the manual were to be built block by block, beginning where agreement had already been reached. The

task was a long and complicated one, but the United Nations, with the support of JCGP and the agencies, was working hard on it.

Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that national execution most certainly did not exclude national design: UNFPA, for its part, had been training many local staff in that field. She confirmed that UNFPA was participating in the African development fund.

The activities of UNFPA were not becoming more donor-driven: its programmes always included the active participation of Governments and non-governmental organizations. As for joint programming, there were as yet very few examples in the case of the Fund.

It would be difficult to give an immediate answer to the thought-provoking question raised by the representative of Canada on the subject of General Assembly resolution 47/199. The Fund was currently reviewing responses from the field and studying the related problems. It was fully committed to the joint HIV/AIDS programme: some organizational matters were yet to be discussed, but activities in the field were already under way.

On the subject of priorities, agreement had been reached - for UNFPA at least - at a previous session of the Governing Council. Finally, in response to a question raised at an earlier meeting by the representative of Australia, the Fund obviously had ideas concerning its present and future activities.

Mr. GRANT (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that as resources decline, agencies became increasingly priority-oriented. While those countries that reduced their official development assistance (ODA) should be criticized for doing so, the 20:20 compact was a different issue. That approach could help to generate broad-based public support in donor countries as people in those countries were more likely to contribute resources for education and basic health than for building infrastructure such as bridges or hospitals. UNICEF was highly decentralized and currently had 87 per cent of its staff in developing countries. While there was not much joint programming, there was a considerable amount of collaboration among agencies. Clearly established goals were very useful in

fostering inter-agency collaboration as the vast universal child immunization programme had demonstrated. In that connection, UNICEF made considerable efforts to harmonize its goals with the two principal agencies outside JCGP, namely, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Collaboration with other agencies had increased considerably in recent years. Concerning problems arising from the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 in the JCGP context, General Assembly mandates for operational activities for development worked much better when specific common goals were set. Combining national execution with programme strategies led to much higher efficiency.

Mr. NGONGI (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) said that as national execution was legislated for WFP, all its development projects were executed by nationals and WFP had extensive national capacity-building programmes. Potential problems to WFP activities becoming more donor driven might arise mostly in the area of emergency relief where the bulk of resources were extrabudgetary. In that connection, the latest WFP governing body meeting had decided that, to the largest extent possible, the organization should remain a multilateral organization. Concerning decentralization, the most recent WFP global meeting of country directors had established a clear timetable for decentralization. As to joint programming, every major WFP project document contained a section on collaboration because food aid alone would not have its full development impact unless it was integrated with other forms of assistance.

Mr. BOEHMER (Germany), referring to the UNDP Administrator's remarks about the distribution of 85 per cent of resources for UNDP activities, asked what happened to the remaining 15 per cent.

Mr. GRAISSE (Director, Bureau of External Relations, United Nations Development Programme) said that national execution had increased dramatically, the level of activities channelled through the Office for Project Services had remained stable while the level of agency executed activities had declined considerably.

Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada), referring to the 20:20 compact, asked whether UNICEF had calculated how much it was spending on the social sector and whether the other agencies were also calculating such expenditure.

Mr. GRANT (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that UNICEF was indeed calculating how much it spent on the social sector and that total official development assistance involved both multilateral and bilateral ODA.

Mr. HADID (Observer for Algeria) asked the UNICEF Executive Director whether the 20:20 initiative would have been more relevant had it targeted 20 per cent of resources devoted to structural adjustment programmes rather than 20 per cent of ODA. He also asked the UNDP representative for the latest figures on the cost of producing the Human Development Report, which in the past had cost from $5 million over a biennium to produce.

Mr. GRAISSE (Director, Bureau of External Relations, United Nations Development Programme) said that the staffing and the cost for that report had not changed. The financing of the Human Development Report was partly done through trust funds for specific aspects including translation, distribution and seminars held on the report in developing countries.

Mr. MALLYA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that while his delegation was satisfied with the trend towards national execution, it felt that there was a need to review the concept as it had lost some of its impetus.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) asked about the difference between national execution and national implementation and about what proportion of the 80 per cent of national execution mentioned by Mr. Speth was national execution as opposed to national implementation. She wondered whether the agencies of the United Nations development system would continue to pursue national execution as an objective if the resources available to them were reduced as a result of national execution. She also asked whether donors would support 100 per cent national execution as that would affect their method of providing funding.

Mr. GRAISSE (Director, Bureau of External Relations, United Nations Development Programme) said that under national execution, Governments theoretically managed all the projects themselves. However, they could entrust part of the implementation of specific projects to a specialized agency. Therefore, while all projects under national implementation could be implemented locally, most of them were partly implemented by specialized agencies. It was up to recipient Governments to decide upon which modality they wanted to use. If they selected national execution as the preferred modality, then UNDP would continue to work in that direction.

Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) asked whether in the context of the triennial policy review it would be feasible to prepare reports by regions as that would help to identify the specific problems of each region.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that while he would examine the suggestion of Colombian delegation in the context of the triennial policy review, he would urge delegates to consult the reports on the country strategy note, particularly the statistical annex which contained information by region.

Mr. KAARIA (Observer for Finland) said that he was puzzled that national execution did not necessarily affect staffing. The impact of national execution on staffing should be examined at a later stage of the proceedings.

Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that he fully agreed with the UNDP Administrator that, as resources shrank, agencies also shrank and developing countries would have to turn to the Bretton Woods institutions to secure funding for development. Instead of referring to donors and recipients, it might be better to talk about more affluent and less affluent countries. Small developing countries such as his own also contributed to the implementation of UNDP programmes. He wanted to know how much of the allocated funds went back to the affluent countries and wondered whether the heads of United Nations agencies would agree that the need for resources was the priority item in any discussion on development.

The PRESIDENT said that the answer to the question of what funds went back to the developed countries was partly provided in document E/1994/64, addendum 2.

Ms. JACOBSEN (Norway) asked how all the new policies and perspectives would be communicated to the field level and whether the current mechanisms were sufficient to achieve further decentralization. Evaluation should focus not only on the quantitative goals but also on the qualitative aspects of development and on how the results of evaluation would be reflected in the programming of activities at the field level.

Mr. CALOVSKI (Observer for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), referring to donor fatigue, said that while the need for more resources for development was increasing daily, there was no strong political will to stop the worsening of the international situation. In that connection, the best policy would be to continue to insist on maximizing the use of available resources and on establishing correct priorities. His country was keenly interested in increased cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations development system. He asked whether UNDP was contemplating opening an office in Skopje, his country's capital.

Mr. NORIGUCHI (Japan) said that while coordination at various levels was necessary, the personal capabilities of the resident representative of each agency were equally important. He wished to know what efforts were being made to ensure the coordination of the degree of decentralization of the various agencies, in order to improve coordination at the field level.

His delegation appreciated the fact that the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development refrained from interfering with activities at the field level. However, it wished to know what, apart from its important efforts regarding country strategy notes, the Department did to prevent coordination problems and whether there was any room for improvement.

With respect to the confusion surrounding the 20:20 concept, he said that it was necessary to differentiate among the developing countries. The 20:20 concept could not appropriately be applied to some developing countries,

whereas for others, it would be a useful way to mobilize the political commitment of Governments and additional resources from donor countries.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the coordination responsibilities of his Department were carried out at Headquarters, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/199 and related resolutions on the responsibilities of the Secretary-General with regard to the resident coordinator system. The Department played a catalytic role in fostering a common approach to such issues as the country strategy note, national execution and the interpretation of the programme approach, and it encouraged the harmonization of manuals. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) ensured coordination at Headquarters on administrative issues such as common premises and training. The Department worked very closely with the specialized agencies. There always was room for improvement, and he was personally involved in efforts to ensure greater coordination.

Replying to the question from the representative of Norway as to how approaches to coordination developed at the central level were communicated to the field, he said that the agencies devised orchestrated communications on particular issues to their field representatives. In addition, the strengthened information support apparatus of UNDP was used to transmit information from Headquarters to the field. Lastly, field-level coordination had been organized in 75 countries through regular meetings of United Nations system representatives at the country level.

Mr. NGONGI (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that WFP took its evaluation functions very seriously and recognized that the quality of evaluations must be improved. Any project proposed for expansion for which an evaluation had been conducted must reflect the recommendations of the previous evaluation as well as the action taken to implement them. Special evaluations had pointed out certain areas which WFP was not best suited to support, and such support had been discontinued. An evaluation of WFP by Canada, Norway

and the Netherlands had made recommendations for improvement and at least 85 per cent of those recommendations had been implemented.

Mr. GRANT (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund), replying to questions from the representative of Norway, said that it was useful to phase in any major new policy directive, such as the country strategy note, over a period of several years and that various reinforcing means to disseminate such directives must be devised. He fully agreed that the quality of the evaluation process was critical, and recalled that qualitative as well as quantitative goals had been set at the World Summit for Children.

He also wished to emphasize that a substantial amount of the work carried out by the specialized agencies was not resource-intensive. Programmes to combat iodine deficiency disorders and to promote breastfeeding were two examples.

The representative of Japan had been correct to point out that the 20:20 concept was not appropriate to all developing countries. However, the figure was a useful global average, as was the case for the recommended ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNP.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that UNDP provided evaluation results immediately to its country offices. Various publications also communicated those results. The findings were channelled through UNDP's policy bureau, which incorporated them in new guidance materials. Evaluation results thus showed up in project evaluations and policy assistance to country programmes.

UNDP did not currently have plans to open offices in the former Yugoslav republics. Given the prevailing budget situation and other factors, the matter would have to be taken up in the Executive Board.

He shared the concern expressed regarding the terms "donor" and "recipient" countries. Many UNDP programme countries also were donors, and 10 of them even contributed more than did countries members of OECD. UNDP preferred the terms "programme countries" for those in which operational

activities for development were carried out and "net contributor countries" for those which made contributions but did not have UNDP country programmes. Similarly, the phrase "the field" appeared an awkward and archaic way to refer to all the countries in which the various organizations of the United Nations carried out programmes.

The statistics he had provided in an earlie. statement regarding the pattern of execution of UNDP-funded activities covered only the five major executing agencies. Many other activities were executed by smaller technical agencies, with the assistance of the World Bank and other organizations. A chart displaying the pattern for each programme cycle could be provided to the Council.

Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund), referring to questions raised by the representative of Norway, said that coordination procedures decided upon at Headquarters were communicated to the field in a coordinated fashion with the other agencies involved. It was also recognized that the same messages must be conveyed very strongly to headquarters staff who were in contact with field representatives. Staff performance reviews took those communications needs into account.

She agreed that it was important to improve the qualitative assessment of programmes. Information resulting from such assessments was provided to individual field offices and, where applicable, programme notes were prepared for others in the field and for use at Headquarters. Training programmes also were developed on the basis of evaluation findings, particularly when such findings merited broader application.

She agreed with the representative of Japan that the quality of staff in the field was a major consideration. UNFPA had invested considerable effort in the selection of qualified staff and in staff training and retraining. The need for accountability, from both a financial and policy standpoint, also was being addressed.

In addition to participation on JCGP, UNFPA worked with its partners through other coordination mechanisms, involving them in some assessment activities and in the preparation of technical guidelines.

Ms. LALIME (United States of America) invited the agency heads to discuss coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions, in particular, those areas in which closer coordination would be helpful, the mechanisms for such coordination and the risks involved.

Mr. NORIGUCHI (Japan) said that he appreciated the information provided by the Executive Director of UNFPA concerning the level of decentralization reached. In view of the differing degrees of decentralization within each agency at the field level, he would like to know what was being done in the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and UNDP to ensure coordination at the highest level.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that improved coordination with the World Bank and other Bretton Woods institutions was essential. At the highest level, there was a need for increased coordination between the heads of the various organizations of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. The Secretary-General had recently met with the heads of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and discussions of the subject had begun in the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

There also was room for further cooperation on programming initiatives with a view to maximizing the complementary strengths of the various United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. A task force comprising World Bank and UNDP representatives planned to meet in late July to discuss a number of challenging proposals. Further dialogue was also desirable on policy and substantive issues. An example was the recent seminar on technical cooperation and capacity-building attended by representatives of UNDP, the World Bank and OECD/DAC countries.

There also was a need for greater coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions at the country level, inter alia, regarding programmes to help

countries anticipate and respond to the effects of structural adjustment programmes and capacity-building projects to strengthen government institutions. UNDP worked with the Bretton Woods institutions primarily through partnership arrangements on resource mobilization in consultative groups and round tables.

Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that UNFPA was engaged in a regular dialogue with the World Bank through consultations among their regional representatives. Such coordination was most active in Asia, where UNFPA managed a number of World Bank projects, and a close dialogue had been initiated with the Bank's representatives in Africa in order to develop common approaches and strategies.

With reference to the decentralization issues raised by the representative of Japan, she said that procedures often differed in the various executing agencies, a fact that compounded problems caused by inadequately decentralized field operations. Accordingly, all members of the United Nations system concerned must deal with the decentralization issue as they worked out a common approach to programming and coordination.

Mr. NGONGI (World Food Programme) said that, although there was room for further enhancement, collaboration between WFP and the World Bank was well established. They had carried out a major study on food aid in Africa which served as a basis for much of WFP's work in the region. The secondment of a WFP staff member to the World Bank had substantially improved communication between the two organizations, with very positive results. Further areas for collaboration included post-disaster rehabilitation and the social dimensions of structural adjustment programmes.

Mr. BIVERO (Venezuela) observed that the transfer of funds by the international financial institutions was increasingly being governed by the overall economic situation and macroeconomic policy rather than by the specific objectives of international assistance, thereby introducing instability and jeopardizing the efficiency of the entire United Nations development assistance system. For example, where a country's exchange rate

policy differed from that of the World Bank, programmes in such areas as education, infrastructure and social development might become paralyzed.

He wished to know how the United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions were coordinating their efforts with respect to the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, and the World Summit for Social Development, in order to ensure that they did not interfere with one another's criteria.

Mr. MONABE (Benin) urged the representatives of the World Bank, IMF and UNDP to respond to that very important question.

Mr. AWAAD (Egypt) said that the increase in cost-sharing by developing countries demonstrated their desire to bear their share of the development process in their countries. However, that trend gave grounds for concern because it could make it difficult for developing countries to implement projects which were urgently needed.

He asked whether it was time that the Capacity 21 initiative had been frozen.

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. NIE Hualiang (China) said that, on the question of priority areas, his delegation felt that when United Nations agencies applied priority areas or themes which had been formulated in accordance with their mandates, they must base themselves on the specific conditions in the country concerned and take a flexible approach. China would never accept any attempt to use priority areas or themes as additional conditions for providing assistance.

His delegation had not received any documents about the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 and hoped that in the future such documents would be made available to delegations in good time.

Miss DIOP (Senegal) asked why there was a low level of national execution in African countries. If the problem lay in the weakness of national capacity, the whole system of United Nations field presence should be

reviewed to see to what extent it could have an impact in strengthening that capacity.

She asked how it would be possible to evaluate the impact of country strategy notes in 1995 when only one country had finished implementing its country strategy note. Furthermore, the country strategy note was only a small part of General Assembly resolution 47/199; it would be better to have an evaluation of all aspects, including the question of resources, national execution, the programme approach and the harmonization of programming cycles.

It was indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/64) that JCGP had concluded that it was not feasible to produce a common manual as requested in General Assembly resolution 47/199 but had proposed that a single, integrated text should be prepared which would serve the same purpose; in that case, she asked why it was not possible to have the manual.

Her delegation supported the 20:20 concept; however, since many questions had been raised about it, she felt that it would be useful to have a more detailed study on the feasibility and application of that concept.

There had been a reference to the priorities of funds and programmes; she sought clarification as to whether national priorities or the priorities of funds and programmes were to be taken into account for programmes at the national level.

Mr. Butler (Australia) resumed the Chair.

Mrs. WYRSCH (Observer for Switzerland) said that it had already been pointed out that with increasing levels of national execution, there should be a decline in United Nations administrative costs at the country level. She was surprised that the representatives of UNICEF and UNFPA, which both had a high level of national execution, could not at least indicate approximately whether there had been any changes in field representation and staff requirements.

On the question of coordination, it would be a good idea to establish a network or pool of experienced resident coordinators which would be available to countries and to United Nations field committees.

She felt that the country strategy note should be presented jointly by agencies, and that the Bretton Woods institutions should be involved. There should be a single strategy note for each country with clear objectives that agencies, programmes and funds would pursue together.

Mrs. KARRE (Observer for Sweden) said that her delegation attached great importance to additionality, burden-sharing, and the need for stable, predictable and assured funds for the United Nations system. The next step in the reform process would be the negotiations on the financing of United Nations operational activities; at that time, it would be important to look into innovative approaches to funding and to make political commitments.

Conflicting messages had emanated from the podium on the relationship between the 20:20 concept and additionality. Her delegation felt that there was a risk that the 20:20 concept might divert attention from quality to quantity and cause funds to be diverted from long-term sustainable programmatic activities which although they did not meet immediate human priority needs were necessary in the long run in order to achieve the same goals. Donors might be pushed to give contributions on an old-fashioned project-by-project basis rather than giving substantive core support to United Nations funds and programmes. There was also a risk that resources might go elsewhere, rather than to the United Nations. It might be better to qualify the 0.7 goal already agreed upon, and establish that 20 per cent of that amount should be allocated to human priority needs in developing countries. Some doubt had been expressed as to whether developed countries would, in fact, come up with their share of 20:20; at the same time, she pointed out that the statistical evidence available with regard to the developing countries was not as encouraging as delegations had been led to believe.

Mr. COSTA (Brazil) said that there seemed to be some confusion about the exact nature of the country strategy note since it was being referred to a both a programming tool and a management tool although, according to General Assembly resolution 47/199, it was a government document which would be a means for Governments to coordinate all external assistance

and would be made available to Executive Boards for reference purposes only. There was no provision for country strategy notes to be considered or analysed by agencies; such an exercise would be beyond their mandates.

Mr. DJANI (Indonesia) said that his delegation would like further clarification on the ratio of administrative costs to programme delivery. If programme resources had to be cut because of declining resources, such cuts should also apply to administrative costs. If those costs could be reduced, more resources could be devoted to programme delivery.

Mr. JOLLY (United Nations Children's Fund) said that there had been some decline in the administrative costs of UNICEF over the past few years. It had been asked whether the JCGP agencies could work out a common definition of administrative costs; that would have to be done with the broader group of United Nations agencies, through the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ).

His understanding of the country strategy note was similar to that of the representative of Brazil. In relation to the comments made by the Observer for Switzerland, UNICEF felt that the country strategy note could not replace the country programme or project process of the different agencies but should provide a framework.

Replying to the Observer for Sweden, he said that, in the strictest sense, the 20:20 concept was neutral in respect to the 0.7 target. UNICEF strongly felt that the 0.7 target should be maintained and reaffirmed; in that sense, the 20:20 concept and 0.7 concept would constitute additionality. It did not believe that there was a risk of diverting attention from long-term development or from programmes to projects. UNICEF did not feel that it was necessary to shift to 20 per cent of 0.7; 20:20 and 0.7 were complementary, rather than alternative approaches.

In the Dakar consensus, the 20:20 concept had been used in a very creative way. Developing countries had been asked to increase their share in priority actions, which had grown out of African goals, and industrial

countries had been asked to follow that lead and increase their share of resources.

Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that on the question of the correlation between national execution and field staffing requirements, in some cases increased national execution required an increase in local staff, as well as inputs from technical support teams. The training of national counterparts was also very important and required time and resources. Some of the requirements were one-time or periodic in nature. Sometimes additional field staff were needed to help with the management of nationally implemented programmes at the country level.

Mr. GRAISSE (Director, Bureau of External Relations, United Nations Development Programme), responding to the representative of Egypt, said that Capacity 21 had not been frozen; there were some new donors and it now had assets of about $US 35 million.

On the question of the need for recipient countries to contribute to programme costs, he stressed that such contributions were strictly voluntary.

In UNDP there was no automatic link between administrative expenses and the level of national execution. When developing countries used the agency execution modality they relied on the network of country offices. They often needed support from UNDP for national execution as well. Thus, it would not be easy to reduce field presence at the current stage.

Replying to the representative of Indonesia, he said that UNDP had reduced its headquarters posts by 15 per cent in 1992-1993 and had cut the administrative budget by a total of $50 million for 1994-1995. Nevertheless, at a time when core resources had declined by 15 per cent, total programme expenditure had not decreased because of larger contributions in the form of cost-sharing and trust funds and the availability of the core resources.

On the question as to why the level of national execution was comparatively low in Africa, he said that in some African countries national execution had reached 80 per cent. Within regions, some countries had chosen to go further in national execution than other countries at similar levels of

development. Thus there was no direct correlation between the level of national execution and the level of development. Moreover, it was not up to UNDP to determine whether national or agency execution was appropriate.

Mr. NGONGI (World Food Programme) said that WFP had promoted national execution from the outset. Steps had been taken to assist countries which had experienced difficulties, especially over the past decade, in meeting their counterpart financial obligations and in handling and accounting for food resources, so as to support national capacity for project implementation, especially in the least developed countries. Recently a decision had been taken to convert lower level Professional posts into national officer posts, especially in countries with many well-qualified people.

Mr. STOBY (Director, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), replying to the representative of China, said that full information had been provided about country strategy notes, the programme approach and national execution. The report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/64) included the full text of Administrative Committee on Coordination decisions, as well as country strategy note guidelines and the text of decisions on the programme approach and national execution. In addition, the reports of the relevant inter-agency bodies dealing with those matters and of CCPOQ were available.

On the question raised by the representative of Senegal regarding the common manual, he said that the work that had been done was described in paragraphs 90 to 93 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1994/64). The first volume of the manual would be issued in 1994-1995. However, it would not be a substitute for individual agency manuals.

Replying to the Observer for Switzerland, he said that the Department's role in operational activities was, by definition, limited; however, it was fully involved in all aspects of General Assembly resolution 47/199, and took the lead in a number of areas.

On the question raised by the Observer for Sweden regarding the importance of broadening the scope of country strategy notes in terms of the range of actors involved, he said that it was true that the Bretton Woods institutions were not fully involved in the preparation of the notes; however, the guidelines made provision for consultative arrangements and that process was fully under way.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

UNITED
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Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

E/1994/SR.20
14 February 1994

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Substantive session of 1994

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 5 July 1994, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. BUTLER (Australia)

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ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued)

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1994/7, E/1994/8, E/1994/9, E/1994/16, E/1994/100, E/1994/L.12 and L.14)

The PRESIDENT informed the Council that the coordination segment would be devoted to the coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies, organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system relating to the achievement of the economic and social objectives of the United Nations. The themes for the session would be science and technology for development and international cooperation within the United Nations system against the illicit production, sales, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. In its decision 1993/205, the Council had decided that the coordination segment would reach agreed conclusions containing specific recommendations on matters related to coordination.

Turning to the general segment, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/162, the Economic and Social Committees of the Council would be subsumed into the plenary. After consultations, agreement had been reached on a new approach to the conduct of the Council's work under the general segment that would focus, in so far as possible, on action and on the taking of decisions. Therefore, it was proposed that there should be no general debate for that segment and that speakers' lists for the individual clusters of items would not be maintained. With respect to items on which there had been no previous debate in another body or to new items, it was understood that delegations might wish to enter into the debate on that subject prior to Council action.

Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) suggested that some meetings could be devoted to an informal discussion of HIV/AIDS.

The PRESIDENT said he would take it that the Council wished to approve its programme of work for the substantive session of 1994 as contained in E/1994/L.12, as orally revised.

It was so decided.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued) (A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, E/1994/34, parts I, II and III, E/1994/35, E/1994/64 and Add.1 and 2, E/1994/84, E/1994/93)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to continue its consideration at the working level of operational activities for international cooperation for development.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had seen only one completed country strategy note, the note for Thailand. Its excellence underlined the value of the process. It would be interesting to have an idea of how many country strategy notes would be completed before the triennial review.

Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that the most important point before the Council was the preparation of the triennial policy review of operational activities, to take place in 1995. Accordingly, among the many elements of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/64), the Council should concentrate on four areas: feedback and evaluation, the practical problems of the programme approach, the role of agencies in national execution and the leadership of resident coordinators. An analysis of the regional dimension would be required in order to gain a clear view of the problems. The Council's resolution on that item should take into account the practical ways in which the Secretariat could provide information to supplement the Secretary-General's report.

Mr. COSTA (Brazil) said that the country strategy note was a very useful instrument for coordination at the field level. His delegation had some questions regarding its implementation, however. Many delegations had advocated the rapid preparation of the largest possible number of country strategy notes, but he wondered whether any attention had been paid to

harmonizing those notes with the programming cycles of the several agencies involved.

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Chief, Operational Activities for Development Unit, Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the Secretariat had not established quantitative targets but had communicated information regarding the country strategy note to the field, where it had received a strong response. It was very well aware of the need to harmonize the notes with programming cycles. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) had established working groups on the relationship between programming and country strategy note cycles.

As for the number available before the triennial review, just under 60 country strategy notes had been initiated. Seven were in an advanced drafting stage, and one had been completed. He estimated that between 10 and 20 would be completed before the 1995 triennial policy.

Miss POLLACK (United States of America) said that the point raised by the representative of the United Kingdom was quite useful, since even preliminary information would be helpful during the triennial review. She also appreciated the suggestion of the representative of Colombia that the field of analysis should be narrowed, perhaps to the regional level. She would be interested to hear further discussion on the country strategy note as a framework for other kinds of donor assistance. It could be a useful model for bilateral assistance, for instance.

Mr. LUNDBORG (Observer for Sweden) said that the country strategy note was the most important outcome of the previous tripartite review. It was both a tool and a process, and the process in itself was important. The Council needed to know more about the problems with that process, however, and its advantages and difficulties should be identified. An exploration of the reasons for any failures would be particularly important.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would like to hear from the representative of the funds and programmes about the

prospects that the country strategy note would lead to a more integrated programming process.

Mr. YAO Wenlong (China) said that China had been active in supporting the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which had required recipient countries to work out a country strategy note on their development needs so that the United Nations could respond in a timely manner. During the current debate on that topic, however, it had appeared that some delegations understood the country strategy note to be a United Nations common strategy, which was not exactly true. In his delegation's view, the country strategy note should be the choice of the recipient country, and that the process should in all cases be originated by the Government of the recipient country. The United Nations could coordinate the process and provide support but should not replace the recipient Government in any respect. His delegation would welcome the opportunity to study further the guidance elements for the preparation of country strategy notes.

Mr. ALTESMAN (UNICEF) said, in reply to the representative of Sweden, that the problems with the country strategy note could be generalized to problems of cooperation between United Nations agencies at the strategic level. The country strategy note was just one mechanism among many, and no single mechanism could respond to all development needs.

Some of the problems lay in the fact that strategy involvement was new to some parts of the United Nations system, as their previous involvement had been entirely at the project level. During the 1980s, there had been a shift from a project approach to a programme approach. The Bretton Woods institutions, for example, had made that shift successfully, but the United Nations system lacked prior experience in that area. That approach was also new at the political level. The United Nations was still learning how to support Governments at the strategic level in an appropriate way. The United Nations system had no mandate for conditionality and must also avoid replicating work done by other development agents. It was in the process of developing its own model for such interventions.

Replying to the representative of the United States, he suggested that an end-of-the-year review would show the extent to which outside partners participated. The review might be conducted through the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). His preliminary assessment was that other international partners might participate in the country strategy note (CSN) process in such areas as national planning, priority-setting and budgetary mechanisms. If programming cycles were harmonized, the support provided by the country strategy note to national planning efforts would automatically establish a linkage with all international donors. Although they did not cover bilateral assistance from the Bretton Woods institutions, country strategy notes could provide guidance to Governments in their relationships with other international partners, for example, with some of the consultative groups or round tables, or to the World Bank initiative on poverty assessment.

Replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, he said that the recent deliberations of the UNICEF Executive Board had illustrated that unless governmental input into individual country programmes was provided in the early stages, it would not significantly alter the content of those programmes. Although a single common review would negate the benefits of a division of labour, some time might be devoted to reviewing common elements of different country programmes and focusing on interactions among the agencies. For example, the nutrition or poverty dimensions of the country programmes of the World Food Programme might overlap with the work of UNICEF.

Mr. MADDHEUS (United Nations Development Programme), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, mentioned recent efforts at common programming in a number of countries. In India, all country programmes had been reviewed separately but simultaneously, and there had been a common segment at the beginning and end of the exercise. A collaborative programme review exercise had also been carried out in Sri Lanka. In the Central African Republic, technical cooperation had been assessed as part of a comprehensive exercise involving all the organizations of the United Nations

system. Consideration had also been given to including the country strategy note, together with an analysis of the role of the United Nations system in the country concerned, as a common first chapter of each agency's country programme.

Replying to the representative of Sweden, he said that one problem which could be analysed in the next triennial policy review was certain countries' reluctance to assign their limited human resources to the elaboration of a country strategy note when United Nations operational activities represented but a tiny fraction of their development assistance. Lastly, replying to the representative of the United States, he said that UNDP, in reviewing all of its processes, including country programmes, was also evaluating its role in round-table meetings and consultative groups for technical cooperation. That might be a potential linkage between the country strategy note and the larger donor coordination mechanisms.

Ms. MESA (World Food Programme), replying to the representatives of Sweden and the United States, said that WFP viewed the country strategy note as an opportunity to integrate food aid with technical and financial assistance provided by other sources. While acknowledging that that would facilitate joint funding, she expressed concern that the formal institution of the country strategy note might actually slow down such integration, which was currently taking place on an informal, ad hoc basis. As the representative of UNDP had pointed out, designing a country strategy note required considerable effort on the part of recipient Governments.

Mr. ANDO (United Nations Population Fund), replying to the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom, said that the country strategy note provided a broader framework for UNFPA programme activities. It also helped the Fund to view population issues and its own performance in a comprehensive manner and to develop comprehensive population assistance programmes for developing countries. Replying to the representative of Brazil, he agreed that the country strategy note should be harmonized with the recipient country's development plan. In that connection,

at the most recent session of the UNFPA Executive Board, no country programme had been submitted for individual Arab States, in an effort to harmonize the country programme exercise with the development plans of all the countries in that region. Replying to the representative of Sweden, he said that one problem associated with the country strategy note had become evident in the recent training session held at the International Labour Organization Centre at Turin, Italy, namely, that national plans lacked clear priorities and goals relating to sectoral or thematic issues.

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Chief, Operational Activities for Development Unit, Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), replying to the representative of Sweden, said that one problem, alluded to by the Executive Director of UNICEF the week before, was that it took time for innovations to become firmly established. The Department had had to develop mechanisms that were consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which had been drafted in consensus language. The results of the workshop held at Turin, resolution 47/199 and the ACC agreement published in 1993 had provided a framework for such mechanisms.

It had become clear from discussions with operational activities staff in 11 countries that organization would be almost as vital as content. It had originally been thought that such organization would require six months, but in fact it would probably take about one year. In order to respond to the many questions which had arisen, the Department hoped to institute a regular review process after the first country strategy notes were submitted.

Responding to the representative of the United States, he said that an analysis in anticipation of the next triennial policy review should focus primarily on linkages with national planning efforts, and those between United Nations organizations globally and at the country level. If content was analysed at all, it should be done in the context of the country programme concerned, in order to identify linkages between the framework provided by the country strategy note and the country programme. It was vital to ensure that recipient Governments were completely involved in any analysis undertaken and

that the analysis highlighted the linkages between the country strategy note as a tool of coordination at the national level. That applied both to completed country strategy notes and to those which were near completion.

Replying to the representative of China, he stressed that the country strategy note process was country-driven and that no steps would be taken without the recipient Government's full consent and participation. The guidelines distributed the week before were fully consistent with the provisions of paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 47/199. In certain cases, the process had been initiated on the basis of texts which had preceded that resolution. Perhaps that had given rise to some confusion.

Mrs. AMERASEKAR (Sri Lanka) stressed that the country strategy note would be successful only if the recipient Government perceived it as an instrument which reflected its own development priorities and which was in harmony with its national development plan. The initiative in preparing a country strategy note must come from the recipient Government, since otherwise it would feel that a requirement was being imposed on it from the outside. Some countries did not have the expertise to prepare country strategy notes or had already committed their limited human resources to other development plans. An expert should be assigned to those countries in order to help them prepare the country strategy note. The priorities specified for UNDP programmes were broad and did not fully take into account the satisfaction of more specific preliminary needs.

The assistance provided by the United Nations specialized agencies was useful because of its flexible, non-conditional and universal nature, but its absolute value was extremely small in comparison with other sources of assistance. Thus, in the immediate term, other areas of development planning took precedence over the preparation of a country strategy note.

It would be counterproductive to pressure United Nations agencies to adopt a fixed number of country strategy notes by a certain deadline, for the exercise must take place in the context of cooperation between the agencies and recipient Governments. Some countries, including Sri Lanka, had only

recently completed the demanding process of adopting country programmes under the UNDP fifth programming cycle. She wondered whether those country programmes could constitute an alternative to the country strategy note for the time being.

Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada), noting the dissatisfaction expressed by Executive Boards about automatic approval of country programmes, said that the current session provided an opportunity to experiment and consider improvements. Perhaps JCGP could be encouraged to select country programmes at a similar stage of elaboration for joint review. Certain country programmes might even be submitted to a governing body or to joint governing bodies for review prior to completion. The appropriateness of rolling country programmes could also be contemplated. Initially, JCGP must assess the potential of the country programme process and make recommendations. In conclusion, perhaps delegations might wish to address their questions, particularly questions such as those raised by the representative of Sri Lanka, to other delegations as well as to the representatives of the programmes, funds and agencies.

Mrs. WYRSCH (Observer for Switzerland) said that country strategy notes could help Governments make better use of the limited United Nations system, in that they would facilitate identification of how resources were currently being used. Analyses of current resources utilization should be provided by the United Nations system at the field level. As a further benefit, the United Nations system would be able to improve its profile, which was often difficult to define in any specific country. The next triennial review exercise should determine the utility of the country strategy note to date. In that connection, the Council might benefit from hearing the views of resident coordinators with recent field experience.

Mrs. VASISHT (India) agreed that it would be useful to conduct a regional analysis before the next triennial policy review, bearing in mind the importance of a country-driven approach in operational activities for development without intrusive demands in terms of accountability, monitoring

and evaluation. As part of the preparations for the review, there was a particular need for an evaluation of national execution and for increased consultation among Member States on guidelines for the resident coordinator system and the role of the JCGP. With regard to the need for decentralization, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/199, she noted that a manual covering policies and procedures was being prepared, and in that connection there should be proper consultation with Member States. Decision-making at the field level should be subject to the direction of the host Government.

Ms. BRUN (Norway) said that the preparation of country strategy notes was time-consuming for all parties but that the notes provided a valuable tool as a framework for country programmes and a means of identifying major development issues and areas in which United Nations activities could make an important contribution. Efforts must, however, continue to increase the linkages between country strategy notes and country programmes. A question that needed to be addressed was where responsibility lay for ensuring such linkages and for making sure that the country strategy note addressed the main development issues in a particular country. There must be a central review mechanism, perhaps involving the resident coordinator.

Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) agreed that the question of the real impact of the country strategy note was fundamental in terms of planning by recipient countries and specialized agencies. The important point was to remember that the note was a means rather than an end, in which connection the Council should bear in mind the importance of short-term pragmatic and flexible planning instruments. Excessive reliance on strategic planning was misplaced. In fact, the country strategy note was only one element referred to in General Assembly resolution 47/199. Other factors of obvious importance included a programme-based approach, the role of the resident coordinator, the financial resources available and the planning capacity of the recipient country. Too much emphasis had been placed on the country strategy note, which was, after

all, only a document. What was needed was real coordination between agencies and leadership by the resident coordinator

Mr. LUNDBORG (Observer for Sweden) said that the country strategy note, in the preparation of which the specialized agencies had a role to play, offered an important means of improving coordination, since many studies had shown that there was fragmentation in the development activities of the United Nations system. JCGP should analyse programmes in preparation and assess how they could be integrated through the medium of the country strategy note. Such an exercise would generate valuable information for the triennial policy review. The note was, of course, only a means to the end of coordination, which was so important in dealing with problems requiring a multisectoral approach where limited resources were available.

Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria) said that the aim of the country strategy note was to optimize the use of resources, which was becoming increasingly important. He agreed that it would be useful for resident coordinators to participate in the work of the Council, since they could provide valuable information on problems at the national level. The Council should view the country strategy note as a means of improving coordination and planning in support of national efforts.

Mr. KELLOWAY (Australia) said that the two main issues were respect for the recipient country's wishes and the relevance of the country strategy note, which must have an impact in the real world. The country strategy note approach was not unique to the United Nations system; it had, for example, been employed by Australia in its bilateral planning, with positive results. The point was not simply to conduct an exercise in coordination but to achieve a real impact on programme delivery and to make activities more effective.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) agreed that a country-driven approach was essential, since projects without government ownership simply would not work. Strategies must interact with government objectives, and therefore the country strategy note itself must be country-

driven if Governments were to see it as a genuinely useful exercise. JCGP should review the question of linkages between country strategy notes and country programmes, as well as the question of structuring the work of the specialized agencies. It was important that the specialized agencies should be involved in the preparation of the country strategy note and in any review of United Nations system activities.

Mr. MADDHEUS (United Nations Development Programme), replying to the representative of India, said that JCGP was currently sponsoring a study of the different practices in national execution; the results of that study should be available as part of the 1995 triennial review. Secondly, UNDP would endorse the suggestion that resident coordinators should be present at sessions, on condition that the Council agreed to that proposal. Lastly, replying to the representative of Sri Lanka, he said that there was a dilemma at the country level in that, on the one hand, agencies had to implement the decisions of bodies such as the Economic and Social Council and their governing boards and strive to become more focused on programming, while on the other hand, they also had to respond to the genuine needs of the countries themselves, and in that sense they were sometimes best placed to fill gaps.

Mr. ANDO (United Nations Population Fund) endorsed the proposal of the representative of Canada to conduct a JCGP review of country programmes, considering it a stimulating suggestion that deserved further consideration.

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Chief, Operational Activities for Development Unit, Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the country programme had been used as an alternative to the country strategy note where it had not been possible to prepare a country strategy note. However, the country programme process was a single-institution process and, unlike the country strategy note, did not cover the system-wide aspect. There were elements in the preparation of the country programme where a close collaborative effort with the country strategy note would benefit both approaches. With regard to the Canadian proposal for JCGP review, he pointed out that the resolutions already provided for linkages between the country

strategy note and the country programmes and for cluster-style reviews of country programmes. He agreed with the representative of Switzerland that the country strategy note provided better visibility to the United Nations system and helped to clarify the work of the Organization in a given country.

While he agreed that regional analysis was an interesting concept worthy of further study, he suggested that another way of grouping countries for the purpose of analysing the country strategy note might be on the basis of typology.

Lastly, with regard to the endorsement by the resident coordinator of the country programme, he said that while resident coordinators were asked through legislation to organize appropriate consultation and review processes at the country level, particularly during the early stages of preparation, endorsement by the resident coordinator would be inappropriate and would, in some instances, give rise to legal complications.

Mr. BOUCHER (World Bank), speaking on behalf of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said that the country strategy note was a useful mechanism to enhance the consistency and discipline with which the United Nations system provided support at the country level. He agreed with previous speakers that the country strategy note must be government-owned, respond to national priorities and be implemented by strong governmental management. The World Bank and IMF offered consulting services to further the harmonization of the country strategy note and to introduce the broader resource framework in which government policies with the World Bank and IMF were being developed for country strategy notes.

Mr. RAMOUL (Observer for Algeria) endorsed the comments of the representatives of India, Brazil and Colombia regarding the need to adopt measures to ensure better efficiency and coordination of operational activities, particularly in the field. Bearing in mind the technical differences between implementation and execution of programmes and projects, he asked what was the attitude of the specialized agencies concerning national

execution, a concept which seemed ambiguous and lacking in a generally accepted definition.

Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) asked the specialized agencies, in connection with the preparations for the next triennial policy review, which provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199 had been relevant to the work in the field. At the time when the country strategy note was first discussed, some delegations had expressed concern that it might introduce another bureaucratic layer to the field, creating problems for United Nations field representation and Governments which had to prepare additional documents; therefore she wondered whether the country strategy note had been successful in coordinating United Nations agencies in the field in the one country which had completed its country strategy note. Furthermore, she inquired whether the Executive Board of UNDP or that of UNICEF would be responsible for reviewing country strategy notes and whether the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly would also play a role in reviewing country strategy notes. Lastly, her delegation believed that since JCGP was composed of agencies which provided funds to the specialized agencies, it should provide an overview in the review of country strategy notes.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organization) said that the country strategy note process had been devised as a remedy against the fragmentation of United Nations operational activities at the country level. Prior to General Assembly resolution 47/199, the International Labour Organization (ILO) had realized the need to define specific objectives at the country level on the basis of need. ILO continued to pursue that process systematically in all countries, and while problems of synchronization with the country strategy note did arise in certain countries, he believed the two exercises were mutually supportive. The specialized agencies should be seen as the technical arms of the funds and programmes that could assist in clarifying the priority issues to be addressed by the United Nations system with its technical and managerial capabilities.

Mr. HEIN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), endorsing the views of the representatives of Colombia, Sri Lanka and India, said that it was the responsibility of Governments to take the initiative in the country strategy process, while the specialized agencies should play an advisory role and assist Governments in developing strategies by providing options for approaches. While it was easier for specialized agencies such as FAO, which had a field network of representatives, to provide such assistance, he believed that the smaller agencies could also make significant contributions at the field level. In reply to the representative of Algeria, he said that the attitude of FAO to national execution was positive. FAO was interested not in pursuing execution of projects but rather in providing technical assistance, advice and direct implementational services only where required.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.